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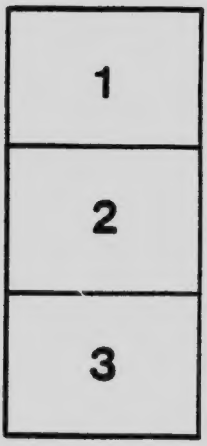

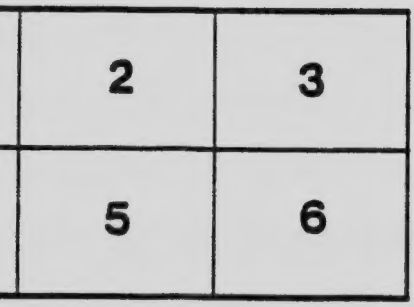

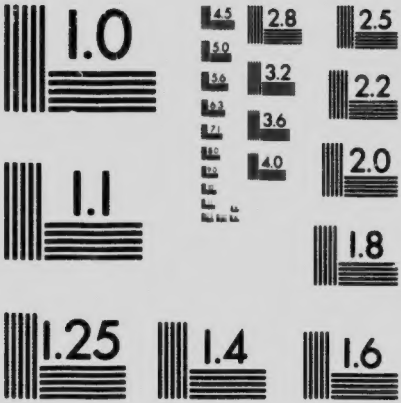

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1908-4

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The Whitney Government and the Public School Question

From Address of

HON. W. J. HANNA, Provincial Secretary

Delivered at Courtright, Ontario, on Saturday, January 11th, 1908.

Mr. Hanna, at the meeting of the electors held in Courtright on the evening of Saturday, January 11th, spoke of the policy of the Whitney government on the Public school question as follows:—

Mr. Whitney in Opposition gave his pledge to the people that should he come to power he would devote himself to the task of improving the schools of this province. What were the conditions to which his government succeeded? For many years we had in this province a Public school system that was good enough on dress parade, but was not producing satisfactory results in the Public schools. It was put on exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago and elsewhere, with the explanation of how the work of the Ontario Public school was directed to fitting the pupil for the High school and the collegiate institute; and the work of the High school and collegiate institute was, in turn, directed to fitting the student there for the University, a completely organized system whereby the children of this province were put in as clay at one end of the machine and came out, all of the same shape and form at the other, and under high pressure all the time, beginning with monthly examinations and ending with monthly examinations; beginning with natural qualifications that if developed by a teacher who had time and opportunity and a system that admitted of it would give the pupil with ordinary application high standing in a particular field, but ending with these high natural qualifications checked and reduced to the level of the student's weakest subject.

Mandate to Mr. Whitney

While the government that we succeeded refused to admit defects, and insisted that the system was all that they claimed for it, Mr Whitney, in Opposition, long maintained that the system was carried altogether too far, and that the work of the rural Public school, should as far as possible, be made complete in itself, since 95 per cent. of the children of the province never get beyond the Public school. He advocated this on the platform prior to the last general election; and when the votes were counted found himself with an unmistakable mandate to proceed to carry out in power what he had advocated in Opposition. Has the government made rea-

sonable progress to that end? Has it devoted itself earnestly to the task of remedying the evils complained of?

It was apparent that to accomplish anything two things must be done: the efficiency of the teachers—particularly of the rural Public schools—must be improved, for without a well-equipped teacher behind the desk little can be hoped for from the pupils, and the numbers of young men and young women prepared to devote themselves to the profession of teaching must be increased, as there was a shortage of teachers which had continued to grow to such an extent that 20 per cent of the teachers of rural Public schools were teaching on permits, because of the lack of properly qualified teachers.

Normal Schools

Experience has demonstrated that to secure the highest proficiency in teaching a normal training is necessary. It is true that the County Model schools in some instances have done good work, but in many other instances the work has not been satisfactory, and in no case is it up to the work done in the Normal schools. The government decided to dispense in time with the Model schools, and to provide in their stead four Normal schools, one each in Stratford, Peterboro, Hamilton and North Bay, in addition to the three Normal schools we already have. The establishment of Normal schools, however, will accomplish little unless we get candidates to attend.

Supply of Teachers

A great many of the teachers in the rural Public schools today received their training in Model schools, of their own county. They have gone into the profession with the thought of remaining in it but three years, and using it as a means to something else. It was felt that if the teacher would enter the school at the outset with a life certificate, and with the prospect of better pay in the profession, the supply would be up to the requirements. The normal school training with the life certificate would not itself be sufficient without the prospect for better salaries. Is it not the fact that the young man of today who equips himself for office work and brings to that work the same application and energy that is necessary to make a success in the teaching profession will be able to command altogether more money than he could from teaching school? Is this not equally true of lady students? Is it not true as well that the province of Ontario with its free public schools and its practically free Normal schools, is at great expense to itself training teachers, who when equipped with certificates at once go to Manitoba and the Western provinces, because of the better salaries that these provinces pay, to the great loss of the pupils of Ontario. Surely this is so.

But some one asks, how will this affect the cost of preparation for the teaching profession. It will red[illegible] that cost. Under the old law the [illegible]ual course was, after leaving the [illegible]tinuation class or the collegi[illegible] four months at Model, three y[illegible] teaching in a Public school with [illegible] non-professional certificate and small pay, followed by nine months in the Normal—four years and a half gone and very little ahead.

Under the present law, after leaving the continuation class or the collegiate—nine months in the Normal—a life certificate and better pay from the outset. In return for that additional five months in the Normal with the additional cash outlay of $50 to $100, the teacher has saved one year of time and can command much better pay from the start. Is there any doubt as to the Normal school training at the outset saving both time and money to the man or woman going into the teaching profession?

It is a fact that if for the past ten years in this province the annual exodus of Normal school teachers to the West had been but three less from each Inspectoral District than it actually was, there would be a sufficient number of Normal school teachers today in the province to supply every Public school in it. The government felt that this situation could be met only by the teacher having a better prospect for pay in this province. To provide this the government, with the approval of both sides of the House and without a dissenting vote, passed the Schools Act of 1906, with its minimum salary clauses, based on the assessed value of the sections. At that time this was the best solution that was presented. The government was not

yet in receipt of the increased revenue that has resulted in a large measure from its policy with regard to mines, timber and the public domain. This increased revenue of the province has enabled the government to repeal in 1907 the Public schools amendments of 1906 with regard to salaries, and to adopt in their stead a solution, which we are glad to know, will be equally effective and altogether more satisfactory to you and to us.

The government that we succeeded gave to the rural Public schools of this province in the last year of its reign $215,000. We have increased this sum to $380,000. The municipalities will be required as heretofore to raise $300 for each school section, and this $300 is to be applied on the teacher's salary. We do not say to any school section that they must pay their teacher more than $300. We do say "We think you ought to pay more than $300, and if you agree with the government in this, the government will contribute 40c. toward every dollar that you pay your teacher over the $300 and up to $600."

The basis of distrbution is calculated to improve the rural schools in several important particulars. The grants are graded so as to offer inducement for the better payment of teachers. The poorer sections are given more money than the wealthier sections, the division being made upon the basis of assessment. Grants are also made on the value of the equipment so that good teaching may be supplemented by the latest appliances. The character of the accommodations likewise earn grants in order that country pupils may learn under conditions as healthy and comfortable as town pupils. Finally the grade of the teachers' professional certificates is rewarded, so that the best teachers may be attracted to the schools.

Is not all this in strict accordance with sound business sense — better paid and better qualified teachers; a more practical and valuable school equipment; healthier accommodations for the pupils so that they may work under the best physical conditions; larger grants for the sections that need them most?

As showing how this works out in the Riding of West Lambton I give here a statement covering every school section in the Riding:—

Statement showing government grant paid to each rural school section of the Riding of West Lambton in the years 1904 and 1907 respectively and showing the net increase to each section due to the amendment of the Public School Act of 1907 increasing the grant to rural Public schools. This statement does not include union sections or grants to continuation classes.

No. of Section	Grant in '04	Grant in '07	Amt. of Increase
	Enniskillen		
1	$10.65	$76.25	$65.60
2	7.85	70.85	63.00
4	45.00	126.20	81.20
5	52.30	203.90	151.60
6	19.65	48.60	28.95
7	28.50	48.35	19.85
8	11.90	74.60	62.70
9	24.60	51.30	26.70
10	8.10	52.20	44.10
11	11.00	68.45	57.45
12	30.85	46.95	16.10
13	15.45	49.20	33.75
14	13.25	51.90	38.65
15	32.40	53.90	21.50
16	21.85	47.30	25.45
17	32.45	54.05	21.60
18	35.45	81.05	45.60
19	14.55	72.85	58.30
20	22.00	49.30	27.30
22	28.00	49.40	21.40
23	11.75	49.50	37.75
24	15.55	51.60	36.05
25	8.15	47.50	39.35
Totals	501.25	1,525.20	1,023.95
	Dawn		
1	20.70	64.60	43.90
2	27.50	52.00	24.50
3	29.80	54.90	25.10
4	19.10	82.90	63.90
5	37.40	72.60	35.20
6	6.40	31.90	25.50
7	23.40	32.50	9.10
8	19.60	30.40	10.80
9	30.60	50.30	19.70
10	27.50	32.80	5.30
11	20.00	53.40	33.40
12	16.50	28.60	12.10
13	32.50	75.00	42.50
14	9.60	32.50	22.90
17	13.20	54.40	41.20
18	28.00	36.10	8.10
20		30.70	30.70
22	7.40	92.70	85.30
Totals	369.20	908.30	539.10

Sombra

6	31.78	89.45	57.67
7	49.76	94.30	44.54
8	36.76	91.10	54.34
9	23.06	63.65	40.59
10	20.95	29.15	8.20
11	25.95	51.65	25.70
12	22.59	61.00	38.41
13	22.67	27.45	4.78
14	29.37	62.55	33.18
15	21.32	42.45	21.13
17	35.05	58.90	23.85
18	26.02	27.55	1.53
19	23.94	51.35	27.41
20	9.75	31.65	21.90
21	24.43	51.50	27.07
24	12.69	54.15	41.46
25	11.11	41.30	30.19
26		38.35	38.35
Totals	427.20	967.50	540.30

Moore

1	16.75	50.80	34.05
2	29.92	49.85	19.93
3	26.68	116.50	89.82
4	20.73	77.00	56.27
5	31.75	72.70	40.95
6	24.37	90.15	65.78
7	26.55	109.75	83.20
8	16.60	72.20	55.60
9	30.64	88.95	58.31
10	11.03	47.00	35.97
11	97.97	216.05	118.08
12	25.66	71.30	45.64
14	14.78	50.60	35.82
15	18.65	69.65	51.00
16	9.60	51.50	41.90
17	37.09	47.30	10.21
18	65.37	170.35	104.98
Totals	501.14	1,451.65	947.51

Sarnia Township

1	14.19	49.35	35.16
2	35.43	96.35	60.92
3	26.12	39.90	13.78
4	31.54	56.95	25.41
5	24.76	77.95	53.19
10	25.18	59.70	34.52
11	13.08	28.65	15.57
12	19.50	72.75	53.25
13	17.40	68.50	51.10
6	35.28	47.15	11.87
Totals	242	597.25	351.77

By reference to this statement, every man can see how his own particular section has been affected by the changed legislation. Not one dollar of this increase would have come to you but for the change of government in January, 1905. It has come to you in the form of a cheque payable to your treasurer instead of in the form of a tax notice. Are we as your trustees, distributing this money wisely? It will be for you to say.

But someone asks—"What is it the business of a government what a section shall pay its teacher?" and urges that this is entirely a matter for the parents and for the section. Is this reasoning sound? I submit not. The salary offered determines in time the quality of the work done behind the desk. Can we afford to leave this to be determined by the parents or by the section? Surely no. The quality of the work done is a matter of the greatest importance. It is a matter beyond the home, beyond the section—it is a national matter. We boast of our timber wealth, of our fisheries, of the riches of our mines; we talk of the product of the dairy and the output of the farm—all valuable in themselves. But the future of this province and of this Dominion will not be determined by these things. It will be determined by the character of the boys and girls who are turned out from our Public schools.

The aid of the government has not stopped here; side by side with rural Public schools are the continuation classes. The government has done much, it will do more for these. They are the collegiate for the country boy and girl. Is there any reason why the country boy should not have as good education as the boy in the town? I can safely leave you to answer.

What we have done and are doing will surely put high the standard of proficiency behind the desk, and will greatly improve the equipment of the school. With these forces at work, who would have the courage to question the result in the boys and girls of this province?